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KT photo | **Tim Bath**

House of Burgess: State election recounts to begin

Paperwork filed in Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Michigan

By Rob Burgess
Tribune columnist

In the weeks leading up to Election Day, then Republican candidate Donald Trump repeatedly called the election “rigged” and promised during the final debate to keep Americans “in suspense” as to whether he would accept the results.

Suppose instead of Trump, Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton had lost the popular vote 62,438,889 to 64,641,150, but won the presidency via the

Electoral College vote 306 to 232. I think you already know full well how Trump and his supporters would react, and recounts would be the least of our concerns.

On Nov. 23, Green Party candidate Dr. Jill Stein launched a fundraiser to conduct recounts in Michigan, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania. According to Stein, these are states where supposed “statistical anomalies” have taken place. Trump won Michigan by 11,612 votes, Pennsylvania by 68,236 and Wisconsin by 22,871. That means, essentially, 102,719 voters decided the election. In the unlikely scenario the recount showed all three of these states flipping to Clinton, it would put 46 Electoral College votes in her column and hand her the presidency. The Clinton campaign announced Saturday it will participate in the Wisconsin recount, which was filed Friday.

“Our effort to recount votes in those states is not intended to help Hillary Clinton,” reads the fundraiser’s “Details You Need To Know” section. “We cannot guarantee a recount will happen in any of these states we are targeting. We can only pledge we will demand recounts in Wisconsin and Michigan and support the voter-initiated effort in Pennsylvania. If we raise more than what’s needed, the surplus will also go toward election integrity efforts and to promote voting system reform.”

After the starting goal of $2.2 million was quickly met, a new target was set. The current projection is for $7 million with $6,381,030.36 of that having been raised as of this writing.

“The costs associated with recounts are a function of state law, which can often be difficult to untangle,” Stein said. “Attorney’s fees are likely to be another $2 million to $3 million, then there are the costs of the statewide recount observers in all three states. The total cost is likely to be $6 million to $7 million.”

Over the weekend, Trump took to his Twitter account and responded to the recount efforts in the even-tempered, sane manner we’ve all come to expect:

• “The Green Party scam to fill up their coffers by asking for impossible recounts is now being joined by the badly defeated and demoralized Dems.”

• “The Democrats, when they incorrectly thought they were going to win, asked that the election night tabulation be accepted. Not so anymore!”

• “Hillary Clinton conceded the election when she called me just prior to the victory speech and after the results were in. Nothing will change.”

• “In addition to winning the Electoral College in a landslide, I won the popular vote if you deduct the millions of people who voted illegally.”

• “It would have been much easier for me to win the so-called popular vote than the Electoral College in that I would only campaign in three or four states instead of the 15 states that I visited. I would have won even more easily and convincingly (but smaller states are forgotten)!”

• “Serious voter fraud in Virginia, New Hampshire and California — so why isn’t the media reporting on this? Serious bias — big problem!”

I am willing to be pleasantly surprised, but I wouldn’t be at all shocked if the awful truth were confirmed: Enough people in enough states voted for Trump to eke out a victory while still losing the popular vote.

Trump offered no evidence to back up his claim of election fraud, but if he truly thinks millions of votes were illegitimate he should welcome a complete audit of the entire country. Maybe this Stein fundraiser is a scam, but so what? Knock yourself out. If Trump is right he has nothing to worry about. In fact, he has a duty to do a recount if he wants to preserve the integrity of the very concept of elections in this country.

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